



Jewish Soldiers from Nuremberg in the First World War and Their Destinies after 1918

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Memorial for Nuremberg's fallen Jewish soldiers of WWI and its Holocaust victims
(photo: Susanne Rieger)

Introduction

When I returned to Nuremberg in 1918 I was, despite the lost war, a German patriot.²

Was I really not a patriot? I see my father in the family album [dressed] as a German soldier who served in the military during the First World War. At school I contributed the only twenty-mark gold piece my father possessed. With my pocket money I bought some nails to stud the obelisk put up in Fürth with the gigantic inscription "Many enemies, much honor."³

¹ The author is indebted to the translator and the late Dr. Jacob Rosenthal (Jerusalem) for numerous references regarding the subject.

² Nuremberg City Archives (henceforth: NCA) F 5 # 405 Fred J. Blum, Erinnerungen über Nürnberger Juden 1918 bis 1938, Typescript (1966), p. 1.

³ Kurt Kellermann (of blessed memory), Gedanken zum Gedenken und Bedenken, in Gerhard Jochem and Ulrike Kettner, Gedenkbuch für die Nürnberger Opfer der Schoa, Ergänzungsband (henceforth: Jochem/Kettner, Ergänzungsband Gedenkbuch) (Nuremberg, 2002), pp. XI - XIII, here p. XII.

These two quotations, the first from a participant in the war, the second from a contemporary witness who was still a schoolboy, show what retrospective significance the experience of the years 1914 - 1918 had for the self-definition of Jewish Germans. The feverish national enthusiasm which seized large sections of the population in August 1914 and whose manifestations strike us as distasteful today because of their equally naïve and violent ardor (*A bullet in Ivan's gullet, a cut in Frenchie's gut*), was even more strongly marked among this minority, since the war seemed to offer the possibility of refuting two of the most persistent anti-Semitic prejudices, of Jewish cowardice and lack of patriotism.⁴ Encouraged by the emphatic declaration of Emperor Wilhelm II that henceforth he knew not parties but only Germans, Jewish reservists and those who had not yet served reported for duty, to fulfill their obligation and provide the conclusive proof of their integration into the community of the German people, if necessary by the sacrifice of their health or even their lives.

The Jewish census of 1916 and the Engagement of Nuremberg Jews in the War

Nevertheless the *truce* between the parties and social groups proclaimed by the Emperor at the beginning of the war was over by 1916 with regard to the Jewish minority with the calumnious *Jewish census* in the German Army, initiated by anti-Semitic politicians, which was intended to furnish proof of alleged Jewish shirking from military service and especially from action at the front. In order to enter a protest against this measure a Nuremberg delegation traveled to Munich in November 1916 and lodged a complaint with the Bavarian War Minister.⁵ It was led by the religiously liberal but politically conservative Chief Rabbi Dr. Max Freudenthal,⁶ whose son Walter returned from the war as a highly decorated volunteer with the 14th Bavarian Infantry Regiment.⁷

Thereafter, like their coreligionists throughout Germany up to 1933, Nuremberg's Jews felt themselves constantly compelled to give proof of their patriotism during the war. The imputation of treason, intolerable to those at whom it was directed, led to numerous statistical inquiries and to the collection of biographical data on Jewish soldiers, which allow researchers ac-

⁴ On the most common anti-Semitic prejudices, above all, cowardice and aversion to athletics, and the reaction to them by Nuremberg Jews see Gerhard Jochem, *Ruhmreiche Zeiten? Die Rolle jüdischer Bürger bei Aufbau und Blüte des Sports in Nürnberg vor 1945*, in *Mitteilungen des Vereins für Geschichte der Stadt Nürnberg*, Vol. 91 (2004), pp. 273 - 293.

⁵ See Max Freudenthal, *Die Israelitische Kultusgemeinde Nürnberg 1874 - 1924* (Nuremberg, 1925), p. 161 ff. (henceforth: Freudenthal, *Kultusgemeinde*).

⁶ Dr. Max Freudenthal (b. 1868 in Neuhaus a.d. Saale, d. 1937 in Munich), Head Rabbi in Nuremberg 1907 - 1934.

⁷ In this regard see Freudenthal, *Kultusgemeinde*, p. 117.

cess to detailed evidence, including on the local level, concerning the nature and extent of participation in the war.



Tombstone of Alfred Weinschenk on the Jewish cemetery, wounded 1915, died 1918
(photo: Susanne Rieger)

The most important sources for Nuremberg are the two works written and edited, respectively, by Rabbi Dr. Freudenthal, *Die Israelitische Kultusgemeinde Nürnberg 1874 - 1924* and the *Kriegsgedenkbuch der Israelitischen Kultusgemeinde Nürnberg*, whose second edition appeared in 1921.⁸ They show that 1543 Jewish soldiers from Nuremberg took part in the war, among whom 991 saw front-line duty,⁹ and 38 received the Iron Cross First Class.¹⁰ According to another responsible contemporary survey 11 per cent of Nuremberg's Jewish soldiers were volunteers, placing the city above the Bavarian average.¹¹

In 1918 the Jewish community numbered 8575 members, amounting to 2.58 per cent of the population.¹² The more than proportional representation of Jews among Nuremberg soldiers becomes clear when these figures are set in comparison with the numbers registered for 1917 of 2,529 *persons active in the military*¹³ among the general population at that time of 328,536 residents; even taking into account fluctuations and losses, Jews accounted for substantially more soldiers than their proportion of the city's population.

⁸ Max Freudenthal, *Kriegsgedenkbuch der Israelitischen Kultusgemeinde Nürnberg*, second edition (Nuremberg, 1921) (henceforth: Freudenthal, *Kriegsgedenkbuch*).

⁹ This corresponds to a percentage of 64.2. The proportion of front-line fighters for the Kingdom of Bavaria was 74 %, or 7204 men; see Nürnberg-Fürther Israelitisches Gemeindeblatt, 9, # 4 (January 12, 1928), p. 65 ff., Haben die Juden in Bayern ein Heimatrecht? Eine Buch-Anzeige von Rabbiner Dr. Sigfrid Behrens, Fürth, here p. 66.

¹⁰ Figures according to Freudenthal, *Kultusgemeinde*, pp. 156 - 163, *Die Gemeinde und ihre Mitglieder im I. Weltkrieg*, here p. 159. Arnd Müller, *Geschichte der Juden in Nürnberg 1146 - 1945* (Nuremberg, 1968), p. 185 ff. (henceforth: Müller, *Juden*) carries forward Freudenthal's portrayal unchanged.

¹¹ J. Segall, *Die deutschen Juden als Soldaten im Kriege 1914 - 1918* (Berlin, 1922), pp. 20 - 24. In comparison: in Bavaria 9.49 %, in the entire territory of the Empire 11.94 % or 10,073 men.

¹² Source: http://rijo-research.de/pdf/DE_NU_JU_nuechron.pdf (accessed 1/28/2007).

¹³ Stadt Nürnberg, *Statistisches Jahrbuch 1919/20*, p. 21, table 49.

Jewish War Casualties¹⁴

The war memorial at the Jewish cemetery on Schnieglinger Straße bears the names of 178 killed in action and died in consequence of the war.¹⁵ Freudenthal's war memorial volume, first published in 1920, identifies 177 of them, at times with informative short biographies.¹⁶ It indicates that in total 28 Nurembergers served in non-Bavarian units.¹⁷ Among the 149 lost Bavarian troops,¹⁸ as could be expected, the two Nuremberg home regiments suffered the highest toll in fatalities, 27 from the 14th Bavarian Infantry Regiment and 17 from the 21st Bavarian Reserve Infantry Regiment. The Nurembergers were deployed on the western and



Tombstone of Alfred Rauh on the Jewish cemetery, fallen in 1917

(photo: Susanne Rieger)

eastern fronts as well as in Italy, among the most diverse troop detachments and units: infantry, field and heavy artillery, reserves, and cavalry, in supply units, medical service, and vehicle columns, as radio operators, sappers, or snipers. The highest ranking individuals in the war memorial book were a first lieutenant,¹⁹ twelve lieutenants, and two head physicians.

¹⁴ According to Michael Diefenbacher and Rudolf Endres, eds., *Stadtllexikon Nürnberg* (Nuremberg, 1999), p. 590, *War Casualties*, the total number of Nurembergers killed in action in the First World War amounted to 9855.

¹⁵ On the war memorial see below and *Nürnberger Israelitisches Gemeindeblatt*, 3, # 6 (January 12, 1922).

¹⁶ The discrepancy is best accounted for by the differences in the state of knowledge when the book was printed and when the inscriptions were placed on the war memorial. The entries in the memorial book are broken down by year as follows: 1914, 29 (the first two on August 19); 1915, 30; 1916, 51; 1917, 24; 1918, 40; 1919, 3.

¹⁷ Baden 2, Masuria 1, Austria 14, Prussia 6, Rhineland 1, Saxony 2, Hungary 1, Württemberg 1.

¹⁸ Ten years subsequent to the war memorial book, solely on the basis of the reports of losses among Bavarian units between 1914 and 1918, 152 Nuremberg war dead were listed in *Reichsbund jüdischer Frontsoldaten*, ed., *Die jüdischen Gefallenen des deutschen Heeres, der deutschen Marine und der deutschen Schutztruppen 1914 - 1918* (Berlin, 1932 [Reprint: Moers, 1979]), pp. 304 - 307.

¹⁹ First Lieutenant Karl Moßmann; see Freudenthal, *Kriegsgedenkbuch*, p. 38. In peacetime it was almost impossible for Jews to ascend to higher ranks because of the open anti-Semitism of the officer corps. Thus there were only six active Jewish officers in the Royal Bavarian Army up to 1914, none of whom was promoted to staff rank during his term of service. With the 1906 retirement of Captain Karl Ortenau of Fürth no Jews remained in the active ranks of officers in the Bavarian army until 1914. An exception was the medical service, in which a total of 15 military physicians served between 1871 and 1914. See Rainer Braun, *Bayern und seine Armee* (Ausstellungskatalog der Staatlichen Archive Bayerns # 21) (Munich, 1987), pp. 47 - 54.

Nuremberg's *Eastern Jews in the War*

Especially popular targets of anti-Semitic propaganda before and after 1918 were the so-called *eastern Jews*, persons who came into Germany mainly from the region of Galicia, a part of Austria-Hungary until the end of the war. Usually starting out from modest circumstances, predominantly engaged in small business activities, and attached to religious orthodoxy of an East European stamp, they were, in the eyes of racists who defamed them as *caftan Jews*, the embodiment of cowardice, cunning, and an absence of patriotism.

The absurdity of such assertions regarding this minority within the minority is also easily proven on the local level: according to an official survey of November 17, 1917²⁰ at this time 828 persons from Galicia with Austro-Hungarian citizenship were reported in Nuremberg, including 452 children. Two hundred fifty had come only during the war, among whom individuals subject to military service would scarcely have been found since they would already have been called up at home. The survey showed 142 adult males engaged in occupational activity, minus five non-Jews. Considering that a certain number among them were unfit for duty or not suitable by circumstance of age and comparing that result with the fifteen Nuremberg dead attached to Austro-Hungarian units recorded in the *War Memorial Book*, an explanation of the high death toll compels the conclusion that *eastern Jews* clearly must have provided more combat troops than the average.

As following the war their native region was appended to the reconstituted Polish state, Galicians who had lived for decades in Germany or even were born there received Polish citizenship they had not sought or became stateless. As a rule their efforts in Nuremberg for naturalization were unsuccessful, including the applications of three veterans of the Austro-Hungarian army.²¹

A striking example from Nuremberg of identification with Germany was the Jew Meilich Wolinsky, who served from July 1915 as a civilian translator in the two Ingolstadt prisoner of war camps, where between 55 and 60 Jewish soldiers were assigned during the war, most chiefly because of their knowledge of foreign languages—20 of the 40 translators in the mail inspection office alone. As a Russian citizen—he was born in 1887 in Kherson, Ukraine—

²⁰ Statistics in file NCA C 7/I, # 9235.

²¹ The holding NCA C 7/IV Immigration and Emigration Records contains a total of 28 such applications from this population group, all of which were declined by the authorities, in part bluntly with the racist argument that the applicant was a *typical Eastern Jew*. German citizenship was also refused to the world war veterans Chaim Katz (# 353), Josef Katz (# 354), and Mendel Nußbaum (# 388), who sought naturalization in 1930. Josef Katz and Mendel Nußbaum were able to escape the Nazis; Chaim Katz was deported to Poland in 1938 and probably became a victim of the Holocaust there. See Jochem/Kettner, *Ergänzungsband Gedenkbuch*, p. 28, entry # 957.

Wolinsky could have declined service at any time on the basis of international law. In autumn 1941 Germany thanked him and his family for this effort with deportation and murder.²²

After 1918

The collapse of November 1918, the subsequent disorder in domestic politics, and the Versailles Treaty, which the majority of Germans felt to be a disgrace, led to the creation of the *stab-in-the-back legend* of the German Army unconquered on the battlefield but subverted from behind by defeatist elements allied with the foreign enemy, not least *international Jewry*, which was scapegoated alternatively as the agent of Bolshevism or of capitalism. Returning Jewish war veterans were confronted not only with the problem of rebuilding their civilian life in the economically and politically uncertain environment of the Weimar Republic but also with recurring incendiary waves of anti-Semitism, which made life difficult for them and their families.²³



Cover of a 1923 special edition of RjF's newsletter *Der Schild* titled *Were we shirkers?*

Under these conditions Jewish Germans quickly recognized the necessity of alliances which could effectively organize and carry on the resistance against the right-wing racists. Already in 1918 the Central Association of German Citizens of Jewish Faith (*Centralverein Deutscher Staatsbürger jüdischen Glaubens—C.V.*) and in Berlin in February 1919 the Reich League of Jewish Front Soldiers (*Reichsbund jüdischer Frontsoldaten—RjF*) were established for this purpose. Former wartime officers played a significant role in the local Nuremberg branches of these organizations.

²² Theodor Straub / Alisa Douer, *Ingolstädter Gesichter: 750 Jahre Juden in Ingolstadt* (Ingolstadt, 2000), p. 238 (henceforth: Straub/Douer, *Gesichter*), and Gerhard Jochem / Ulrike Kettner, *Gedenkbuch für die Nürnberger Opfer der Schoa* (Nuremberg, 1998), p. 383 ff., entries # 2286 Meilich, # 2287 Rosa (wife), and # 2285 Betty Wolinsky (daughter) (henceforth: Jochem/Kettner, *Gedenkbuch*).

²³ On anti-Semitism in Germany during the Weimar era see Avraham Barkai / Paul Mendes-Flohr, *Deutsche-jüdische Geschichte in der Neuzeit, Vol. IV, Aufbruch und Zerstörung 1918 - 1945* (Munich, 1997), pp. 50 - 59.

Precisely here, where the extreme rightwing movement was very popular²⁴ and Streicher's gutter rag *Der Stürmer* was published from 1923, their efforts had a significance that extended beyond the city's boundaries.

A 1921 report from the *Nürnberger Israelitisches Gemeindeblatt*, twelve years prior to the Nazis' *seizure of power*, offers an example of the outlandish criticisms to which Jewish war veterans were exposed:²⁵

As will be recalled, in his "Open Letter to Professor Schunk" the local bookseller Schreckenbach accused a "Jew named Heimann" of having deserted his company and gone over to the French at Verdun in 1915. Through intense investigation by the Nuremberg branch of the League of Jewish Front Soldiers the aforesaid "Jew Heimann" was located, and it now turned out that the young man was captured simultaneously with a larger number of comrades from his regiment, subsequently received the Iron Cross Second Class for brave conduct against the enemy, and that 3 of his brothers were killed in action in the World War. Heimann has already initiated a libel action against Schreckenbach.

At the end of 1929 the leadership of the local C.V. even succeeded in putting the pathological slanderer Julius Streicher behind bars for two months. Nine years later the chairman of the Nuremberg C.V., Dr. Walter Berlin, First Lieutenant and battery commander of the 8th Field Artillery Regiment, holder of the Iron Cross First and Second Class, the Bavarian Military Service Medal 4th Class with Crown and Swords, and the Wounded Decoration²⁶, nearly had to pay for this with his life when SA men beat him half dead in the climate created by *Reichskristallnacht*.

The Local Branch of the RjF and its Chairman, Dr. Leopold Landsberger

In the year of greatest legal success against Streicher, the *Führer of Franconia*, the RjF and its Nuremberg branch could look back over its ten-year existence. The assessment of the work it had accomplished which appeared on this occasion in the *Gemeindeblatt*²⁷ identified the most important goals of the organization to be the fight against anti-Semitism, particularly against lies concerning Jewish veterans, the promotion of sport, and the organization of housing. That the RjF did not consider itself to be an advocate of special interests, but rather demanded nothing other than normal relations between Jews and non-Jews and otherwise was more con-

²⁴ On the development of anti-Semitism in Nuremberg after 1918, the NSDAP, and their forerunners see Müller, *Juden*, pp. 190 - 201, and Rainer Hambrecht, *Der Aufstieg der NSDAP in Mittel- und Oberfranken (1925 - 1933)* (Nuremberg, 1976).

²⁵ *Nürnberger Israelitisches Gemeindeblatt* 1, # 2, April 1, 1921, p. 8, Aus der Abwehrbewegung.

²⁶ See Ludwig C. Berlin, Senta Josephthal, and Gerhard Jochem, Berlin, Metzger, Josephthal: Sechs exemplarische Biographien von Mitgliedern bedeutender jüdischer Familien aus Nürnberg, in *Mitteilungen des Vereins für Geschichte der Stadt Nürnberg*, Vol. 89 (Nuremberg, 2002), pp. 181 - 199.

²⁷ Attorney Dr. Landenberger, Nürnberg, 10 Jahre Reichsbund jüdischer Frontsoldaten, in *Nürnberg-Fürther Israelitisches Gemeindeblatt*, 9, # 7, March 1, 1929, p. 133 ff.

servatively inclined is visible in the prospect wherein the author formulated his hopes for the future:

The RjF desires, however, as its highest hope that hatred and discord among the German people may come to be so silenced that again, as previously on the battlefield, all sectors and strata of the German nation can stand united together in common effort for a single fatherland.

The author of these lines, attorney Dr. jur. Leopold Landenberger (b. November 12, 1888 in Scheßlitz, Upper Franconia, d. May 2, 1967 in New York), left his mark on the League's policy and public image between 1922 and 1938 as branch chairman and, in addition, president of the Bavarian RjF.²⁸ Landenberger's career is typical for many German-Jewish participants in the war.²⁹ A Doctor of Law in 1913, he returned to Nuremberg in 1918 as an oft-decorated and 30 per cent disabled front officer and was admitted to practice there. He carried on his successful practice at Karolinenstraße 28 until 1938 when his license was withdrawn as for all Jewish lawyers. As a Jew and outspoken prominent anti-fascist he was especially exposed to Nazi hostility. This peaked in *Reichskristallnacht* with the destruction of his residence at Rieterstraße 15 by the brown mob. Reluctantly this ardent patriot had to recognize that he, his wife, and his two daughters no longer had a future in their native land. Hence the family emigrated via England to the USA, where they arrived in February 1940, and Landenberger had to construct a new professional existence for their livelihood. Determined and ambitious, he acquired the necessary language skills and, alongside his occupation as insurance broker in New York,³⁰ took up the study of law for the second time since the qualifications he had gained in Germany were of no value in the USA in view of the completely different system of justice. After successful completion of study he was admitted to the practice of law in the US in 1945.

²⁸ Landenberger was, moreover, a leading member of the Nuremberg *Deutsche Demokratische Partei* (German Democratic Party), the party of the liberal lord mayor Dr. Hermann Luppe, and also member of the governing body of the Israelite Religious Community and after 1933 of the presidential committee of the *Reichsvertretung der Juden in Deutschland*; see Freudenthal, *Kultusgemeinde*, p. 165, and Joseph Walk, *Kurzbiographien zur Geschichte der Juden 1918 - 1945*, published by the Leo Baeck Institute Jerusalem (Munich, 1988), p. 214. On Landenberger's activity in Nuremberg, see also Müller, *Juden*, p. 179, 224, 273, 335.

²⁹ Biographical data from NCA C 21/III # 1982; Gerhard Jochem, *Mitten in Nürnberg: Jüdische Firmen, Freiberufler und Institutionen am Vorabend des Nationalsozialismus* (Nuremberg, 1988), p. 74; and Reinhard Weber, *Das Schicksal der jüdischen Rechtsanwälte in Bayern nach 1933* (Munich, 2006), p. 282 ff. (henceforth: Weber, *Rechtsanwälte*).

³⁰ In addition from 1940 he offered legal advice for his fellow exiles from Germany; see advertisement in the German-language émigré newspaper *Aufbau*, # 50, December 13, 1940.



Plaque at the memorial naming the fallen Nuremberg soldiers
(photo: Susanne Rieger)

The 1922 Memorial to the Fallen

Before meritorious men like Landenberger were driven out of their home city under mortal danger, they fought for the honor and memory of Jewish participants in the World War. Still today the memorial at the New Israelite Cemetery on Schnieglinger Straße is visible expression of these tragically failed efforts and of symbolic importance through its enlargement into a memorial site for the victims of the Shoah. Erected according to a design by the well-known Munich architect Fritz Landauer, its dedication on November 12, 1922 was one of the rare occasions when Jews and non-Jews in Nuremberg demonstrated their unity grounded in the common experience of war, as along with representatives of the religious community and the RjF, *Reichswehr*, veterans' organizations, and associations of active and inactive officers of current and earlier Nuremberg regiments also took part in the observation.³¹

Additional soldiers' graves, including those of foreign prisoners of war, are located in Section L of the cemetery. Inscriptions on family and individual grave markers also indicate that the departed died in the war.³²

³¹ On the proceedings of the dedication see *Nürnberger Israelitisches Gemeindeblatt* 3, # 6, December 1, 1922, p. 40.

³² See in addition Israel Schwierz, *Denkmale und Gedenktafeln bayrisch-jüdischer Soldaten - Nürnberg* (<http://www.historiker.de/projekte/hdgb/kriegsgraeber/deutsch/orte/nuernberg.htm>; accessed May 11, 2000), also including transcription of the inscription of the Memorial to the Fallen with the list of names. On the Memorial and soldiers' graves see also Freudenthal, *Kultusgemeinde*, p. 44 ff.



Grave of the Russian POW Jankel Resanski who died 1916 in a Nuremberg military hospital
(photo: Susanne Rieger)

The Scandal at the Burial of Reserve Lieutenant Dr. Otto Rosenthal, 1924

How fragile the solidarity between Jewish and non-Jewish war comrades was under constant anti-Semitic pressure was shown just two years after the ceremony for the fallen in Schniegling by the scandal that developed over the obsequies for the former artillery officer Otto Rosenthal. The accredited engineer Dr. Otto Rosenthal, born in Nuremberg in 1881, inventor of a synthetic adhesive and founder of a chemical factory in Nuremberg-Wetzendorf,³³ began service in the field as a noncommissioned officer and



Dr. Otto Rosenthal (1881 - 1924)
(photo: Dr. Jacob Rosenthal)

³³ Biographical information on Dr. Otto Rosenthal from his son Jacob (Heiner) Rosenthal, Jerusalem, Jugenderinnerungen an Nürnberg und das Melanchthon-Gymnasium, http://rijo-research.de/pdf/DE_NU_JU_rosenthd.pdf, accessed January 28, 2007 (henceforth Rosenthal, Erinnerungen).

was decorated in February 1915 with the Iron Cross Second Class, in May 1916 with the Bavarian Military Merit Order Fourth Class with Swords, and still in the same year with the Iron Cross First Class.³⁴ Rosenthal rose to lieutenant by the end of the war but contracted an illness during his time in service to which he succumbed in 1924. A report by the *Nürnberg-Fürther Israelitisches Gemeindeblatt* gives particulars of the sequel and is reproduced here in full because of its value as a source.³⁵

From the defensive fight (Anti-Semitism in a Military Association). In Issue 5 of the News of the Association of the Members of the Former 8th Royal Bavarian Field Artillery Regiment appears the following: "Meeting resolution: At the conclusion of the members' meeting of February 28, 1925, the motion was approved that in future the Association's flag is not to be displayed at the obsequies for comrades of the Israelite faith and likewise that participation is left to the choice of individual comrades, since on the occasion of the burial of our member Res. Lieut. Rosenthal the rabbi's remarks at the coffin of our comrade veered into politics, although uniformed officers, the Association flag, and numerous members were present." The interment of Dr. Rosenthal took place on February 29, 1924. The "political" part of the memorial address of the officiating rabbi, Dr. Heilbronn, consisted of emphasis on the departed's love of country, sacrificial courage, and high soldierly virtues; here the clergyman also briefly referred to attacks on the loyalty to fatherland of Jews, as were common and at that time again manifested by Germany's well-known military leader.³⁶

These facts alone demonstrated the cast of mind that gave rise to the resolution. Since, however, there was nevertheless the possibility that having been approved, contrary to regulations, without prior notification by an ordinary gathering of members instead of a plenary meeting, it would be annulled by unprejudiced members as overly hasty and altogether inappropriate, a Jewish member of the Association put forward a motion to that effect. Thereupon the executive committee, calling the rabbi's speech unobjectionable, declared itself willing to support such a measure. However, when in the next members' meeting the Association's honorary chairman, Lieutenant Colonel (ret'd) Baron von Fraunberg, opposed even a discussion, the gathering—including the executive committee!—declined to give the Jewish member even a hearing regarding the motion to annul.

It goes without saying that the Jewish members thereupon, as far as is known, announced their resignations. Written notices of resignation are to be sent to the chairman Herr Hans Rückert, Schweinauerstraße 56.

This episode—by no means an isolated incident—from the politically comparatively quiet mid-twenties shows that the poison of anti-Semitism also continually festered among soldiers' organizations and only sought pretexts of this sort to unleash its destructive effect. It was of no matter to those affected that its spokesmen called themselves German patriots. It was a foretaste of the humiliations that awaited them after January 30, 1933.

³⁴ The decoration also gained press notice beyond the region; see *Israelitisches Familienblatt*, # 39 (September 28, 1916), p. 9: Zwei jüdische Ritter des Eisernen Kreuzes Erster Klasse.

³⁵ *Nürnberg-Fürther Israelitisches Gemeindeblatt*, 5, # 9 (May 1, 1925), p. 73.

³⁶ An allusion to the anti-Semitic tirades of General Ludendorff, then an ally of Hitler, during the judicial proceedings against the putschists of November 9, 1923, taking place at that time in Munich.

After 1933

Hitler's glorification of his own war experiences, but also domestic and foreign policy considerations led at the beginning of the Nazi regime in Germany to ambivalent, at times even paradoxical treatment of Jewish veterans of 1914/18, even as hate-filled, unbounded anti-Semitism remained a constant in Nazi ideology; they were not exempt from organized excesses like the national *Boycott Day* of April 1, 1933, and public harassment of Jewish notables in Nuremberg by SA and SS³⁷ on July 20 of the same year. On the other hand the son of the wartime officer Dr. Otto Rosenthal received a war orphan's annuity until his forced emigration in 1939,³⁸ and until 1935 the *Führer and Reich Chancellor* also bestowed the *Cross of Honor for Front Combatants* on Jewish veterans, which must only have aroused their bitter scorn, at latest in view of the racial laws issued in Nuremberg on September 15 of that year.



Cross of Honor for Front Combatants 1914 - 1918
(photo: Prof. Ludwig Bauer)

³⁷ On this local pogrom, which, above all, was directed at members of both Jewish lodges in Nuremberg, see Weber, *Rechtsanwälte*, p. 274 ff. (Ernst Feilchenfeld biography) and p. 288 (Alfred Ortweiler biography), as well as Müller, *Juden*, p. 219.

³⁸ See Rosenthal, *Erinnerungen*.

The Example of Front Soldiers among Jewish Lawyers in Nuremberg

Under the Nazis' racist legislation the distinction of having been a *front-line combatant* during the First World War was more than just an honorary title for the members of many occupational groups and their families, as thus, for example, officials and members of the free professions escaped immediate prohibition of their employment. Correspondingly—and against the interests of those affected—the authorities then meticulously checked the personal records of those who referred in this connection to having served at the front during the war.

In 2006 a study has appeared on Jewish lawyers residing in Bavaria³⁹ which, utilizing all available sources, offers an extremely detailed portrait of administrative terminations and the individual histories that they determined. It shows that 67 of 139 Jewish lawyers practicing in the Nuremberg provincial court district⁴⁰ had to be officially conceded front combatant status, among them 16 war-disabled.⁴¹ This finding is all the more striking since it must be seen as not taking into account those unfit for duty, not summoned to military service because of age, and stationed in rear areas or the Territorial Army. The Nazis, foremost the justice ministers of Bavaria and Prussia, Frank and Kerrl, raged against this exception, which they themselves had created with this regulation, and did not rest until the prohibition of all Jewish lawyers from the profession, which they could put into effect only on November 30, 1938.⁴²

From the ranks of Bavarian Jewish jurists also comes a document that movingly testifies to the courage and belief in fatherland and justice with which the war veterans still believed in 1933 that they could claim their self-evident rights as Germans among Germans. In a letter to Reich President von Hindenburg on the occasion of the *Day of Potsdam* on March 21, 1933, the Munich lawyer Dr. Hanns Silberschmidt wrote this half-despairing, half-defiant appeal:

According to the report of the Völkischer Beobachter newspaper of March 11/12, 1933, the Provisional Bavarian Minister of Justice, Dr. Hans Frank, has identified as one of the goals for which the regime is striving: the German person will have his justice ruled on and fought for only by German racial comrades.

This sentence should not contain any cause of concern for me as a German lawyer, for I am a German not only by citizenship, thus legally, but also by sentiment and culture. I am a German also by fate, for I have shed my blood for Germany as a German soldier: as evidenced by my military credential, as a lance corporal in the 7th Company, 14th Bavarian Infantry Regiment, I was thrice wounded by hand grenades, in head, chest, and shoulder, in close-quarters combat on August 26, 1918, in the Battle of Monchy-Bapaume [...].

In today's proclamation the Reich President has had the great goodness, in heartfelt comradeship, to greet all his comrades of the Great War with reference to their sacrifices of life

³⁹ Weber, Rechtsanwälte.

⁴⁰ Including Central Franconia, Upper Palatinate, and northern Lower Bavaria.

⁴¹ The totals were determined by the author through examination of the relevant short biographies in Weber, Rechtsanwälte, pp. 270 - 297.

⁴² See Weber, Rechtsanwälte, p. 119 ff.

*and health—that gives me the courage to venture a request: may, through the intercession of the Reich President, the Jews of Germany, who fought and bled for nation and fatherland like all other comrades, been protected with their families from the horrific dishonor of expulsion from the national community through the destruction of their livelihood, their sphere of activity.*⁴³

The Fates of Jewish War Participants in the Nazi Era

At the latest, following *Reichskristallnacht* on November 9/10, 1938, Jewish front soldiers also lost the dubious *privileges* that until then had postponed for them the systematic deprivation of rights and exclusion of their coreligionists. The Second World War, commencing on September 1, 1939, further shrank the possibilities of leaving Germany. Whoever had not achieved this by the time of the German invasion of the Soviet Union in June 1941 was in exactly the same position as those who had fled to a country that was later occupied by the Wehrmacht.

Among these unfortunates may be reckoned Superior District Court Judge Josef Hesselberger (born November 14, 1873 in Nuremberg), who came from an established family of hops merchants. In 1914 he volunteered for service as a reserve captain with the 3rd Foot Artillery Regiment in Ingolstadt and was assigned to the front during the entire war, until the end of May 1916 in the west as head of the 4th Ammunition Convoy, then as battery commander in Russia and Rumania, again from autumn 1917 on the Western Front, finally from July to December 1918 as commander of Foot Artillery Battalion 26. His superiors attested to his *great sangfroid and toughness in achieving his objectives on the battlefield*. In recognition of his more than 27-year active and reserve service he received the rare distinction of major's rank in 1918. On November 11, 1944 Hesselberger was deported from Erfurt to Theresienstadt concentration camp and died there already on February 16, 1945.⁴⁴

Likewise, neither his bravery as a soldier during the First World War nor flight abroad saved the reserve lieutenant and merchant Karl Lauinger (born August 12, 1889 in Nuremberg): deployed as a raw volunteer from the beginning of 1916 the noncom and candidate for officer proved himself outstandingly: *At every opportunity—in three extensive patrol undertakings—he volunteered and was by his own wish detailed to the most advanced squad on the barbed wire, where he distinguished himself by calm, skillful conduct*. Accordingly, already in July 1916 he was promoted to lieutenant. Machine gun platoon commander in the Ingolstadt 13th Infantry Regiment from March 1918, he took part in the breakthrough battle at Cambrai, during which he voluntarily carried a message through *heedless of death*. A severe wound pre-

⁴³ Cited by Weber, Rechtsanwälte, p. 70.

⁴⁴ Biographical information in Straub/Douer, Gesichter, p. 158, and Jochem/Kettner, Gedenkbuch, p. 134, entry # 789.

vented him from seeing further action; subsequently in 1920 he was awarded the Iron Cross First Class for his oft displayed courage.

Lauinger certainly recognized the danger that the Nazis represented for him and his family, but fatally as goal of his emigration he chose the Netherlands, which were overrun by the Wehrmacht in May 1940. From there he and his children were deported probably in October 1944 and murdered in Auschwitz.⁴⁵



Otto Krakenberger (beneath the X)
(photo: Ernst O. Krakenberger)

The hops merchant Otto Krakenberger (Nuremberg 1898 - 1991) escaped a similar fate only with considerable luck. Descended from a national-minded family, as a schoolboy he was already a member of the association *Nuremberg Military Power*. In active service from 1916, Krakenberger was deployed in the Carpathians, Galicia, and Belgium. After the war he participated in 1919 in the destruction of the Munich Soviet Republic as a member of the *Freikorps Oberland* militia. Despite official confirmation of his status as a front combatant he found it necessary to emigrate in early 1939 to Holland, where he converted the local branch of his enterprise into its main office. After the German invasion Otto and his wife Martha were moved successively to the concentration camps Vught, Westerbork, Bergen-Belsen, and Biberach a.d. Riss, yet they survived the Holocaust and eventually returned to Germany.⁴⁶

The complete insanity of the Nazi racial ideology and the ingratitude of the fatherland for duty fulfilled is demonstrated in the life path of Regional Court President (1946) and State Secretary in the Bavarian Special Ministry for Political Liberation (1947) Camill Sachs (born

⁴⁵ Information in Straub/Douer, *Gesichter*, p. 168, and Jochem/Kettner, *Gedenkbuch*, p. 191, entries # 1131 Karl, # 1129 Andreas (son), # 1130 Hanna (daughter), and # 1132 Thomas Lauinger (son).

⁴⁶ Information in the finding book for holding NCA E 10/68 Nachlass Krakenberger.

May 17, 1880 in Würzburg, died August 4, 1959 in Nuremberg), who, although a Protestant, counted as a *racial Jew* for his perpetrators because of his ancestry. Following legal study in Würzburg, Berlin, and Munich he entered the Bavarian judiciary and joined the military in the First World War. Subsequently—like, decades later, his son Hans, well known to Germans from the popular television program *Was bin ich?*—he worked as state prosecutor, then as judge and adult education lecturer in Nuremberg. Already in October 1933 Sachs was dismissed from state service on political and racial grounds and—under the constant threat of deportation and murder—had to get by as a temporary worker and mason. In 1942 the Nazis sent his 86 year-old mother Luise to Theresienstadt, where she died less than two months after her arrival.⁴⁷ Camill Sachs survived the Nazi era and after liberation became a member of the first Nuremberg municipal council.⁴⁸

Research Priorities and Outlook

Given the importance of the subject, which, as shown, reaches far beyond the narrow boundaries of military history, it must be emphasized at the end of this brief synopsis that research into the lives of the Nuremberg garrison's Jewish soldiers, on active service or in the reserves, remains urgently needed because of the deep insights that are to be expected into the history of society, culture, and mentalities in the city. It must not transpire that almost seventy years after the end of the Nazis' rule their declared aim of obliterating all memory of the Jewish contribution to the development of communal life should yet be achieved in this area. Research already accomplished in 2000 for Ingolstadt with the frequently cited book of Straub and Douer could be based for Nuremberg on the preliminary works also referred to in this essay and be significantly expanded by drawing upon additional sources, particularly from the Bavarian Military Archives in Munich.

Among aspects to be investigated in such a project only the veterans' associations' treatment of their Jewish members before and after 1945 would be an obvious choice. An essential broadening of perspective could be gained through consideration of Allied military personnel who, coming originally from Nuremberg and from families driven out of their former fatherland with scorn and contempt, as *subhumans*, returned as American, British, Soviet, or exile

⁴⁷ Jochem/Kettner, *Ergänzungsband Gedenkbuch*, p. 50, entry # 1739 Luise Sachs, née Offenbacher.

⁴⁸ Information in NCA C 21/III, # 1987.

Polish soldiers. Service in the Allied armies offered them the possibility to achieve recognition and equal status with the native population in their new homelands—motives resembling those of their fathers in the First World War.

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